

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

NORMAL "TWEED" WEBB

MAY 4, 1974

St. Louis, Missouri

by BILL MORRISON

for the MISSOURI UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

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MORRISON: . . .Where were you first given the name of "Tweed"?

WEBB: In 1912, I was going to a St. Louis school and one of my classmates met me on the way to school and I had on a tweed suit, a tweed overcoat, and a tweed cap and a fellow named Johnson, he said "He got on everything that's tweed. I believe that I'm going to call you "Tweed".

MORRISON: And that's been with you?

WEBB: Yes, that's stuck with me the rest of my life.

MORRISON: And where did you go to school in St. Louis?

WEBB: Well, I went to schools, I went to Banneker, Simmons, John Marshall, Sumner, Central High in Cleveland, Ohio. And a two year business course, I took up book-keeping and typing.

MORRISON: When did you start playing baseball?

WEBB: Well, I started playing baseball at age ten, if you want to say a kid's team, that team was named "'Tweed's' Blacksox".

MORRISON: You were the coach?

WEBB: I was manager of the team.

MORRISON: It was a boys' team?

WEBB: It was a bunch of boys around Garfield and Compton Street.

MORRISON: That's where you grew up in?

WEBB: That's where I grew up in.

MORRISON: And how long did you manage that team?

WEBB: Well, uh, up until um . . . till my father took over the team. Now during my days as a player, I played shortstop, and started my career as playing pretty good ball, back in 1915; it was still "'Tweed's' Blacksox". In 1921 and 1922 and 1923 it was my father who managed my team. We were called then the "St. Louis Blacksox". And in 1924 Mr. Bloomer sponsored our team under his name. He was a tailor.

MORRISON: This was amateur baseball?

WEBB: This was amateur baseball. "Bloomer's Tailors". In 1926 we played for the Pullman Shock Company.

MORRISON: Where was that, in downtown . . .

WEBB: That was at Pullman Shock, let's see, that was out here, in North St. Louis, Pullman Shock repaired cars and things. I remember how in those days you could play ball and get pretty good jobs.

MORRISON: And you did that along with this full-time job?

WEBB: Yes, full-time job, yes . . .

MORRISON: And how long did you do that?

WEBB: Well, I didn't work out there until a couple years because they lay off a lot.

MORRISON: I see you worked for the shop and then played for the team. . .

WEBB: We had a pretty good team at Pullman, and I was weighing only about 135 to 140 pounds, I was considered one of the best defensive shortstops in the Tandy League. I was a tremendous hustler, of course I'm papa's son out of five. I was always displaying sportsmanship. I had a life-time batting

average of .350, and 1925 with the "Bloomer's Tailors" I hit .402.

MORRISON: Wow, that's a pretty good average.

WEBB: And in 1924 set a fielding record, with a .955 mark.

MORRISON: That's like um, uh, .955 . . .

WEBB: That's the percentage for your fielding. To break it down, the statistics I don't have here, but I could find it, but I would say--I was also the number two hitter in most of the line-ups, hard batter to strike out, hit-and-run play-maker, and pretty fair bunter.

MORRISON: Were you pretty fast on the bases?

WEBB: Oh, I would say average, but I knew how to run bases, let's put it that way. It doesn't take speed, you take Jackie Robinson, he wasn't very fast but nobody could steal a _____ base like Jackie Robinson because he wasn't so much speed, he . . .

MORRISON: He knew how to do it.

WEBB: . . .and he wasn't much for up in his age but he was tremendous to see.

MORRISON: So he was just an average runner?

WEBB: He was just average speed but he knew the technique of how to run bases.

MORRISON: What is the technique, what do you have to do to be a good base-runner?

WEBB: Well, you got to learn to watch the pitcher how he toes the rubber, and you got to watch his movement, the guy studies all this. With words being inadequate I would like to stress the attitude that's it's a great pleasure and a great thrill, and a great privilege to be interviewed by you here today about Black baseball. . .

MORRISON: It's my pleasure.

WEBB: . . .history of University of Missouri at St. Louis program. First I

would like to pay tribute to "Cool Papa" (James) Bell, my best friend. As you know, he will be enshrined in the Hall of Fame at Cooperstown on August 12th.

MORRISON: This coming August 12th.

WEBB: Black or white, perhaps the fastest base-runner ever and I have seen 'em all play since 1913. I've been observing baseball, I've been a baseball fanatic, I talk baseball every day for sixty years, now as ever, especially amateur baseball.

MORRISON: Ever since you were ten?

WEBB: Ever since I was ten, that's right. Now I get back to "Cool Papa" Bell, "Cool Papa" Bell came here when he was sixteen years old from Mississippi, and his four brothers played for a team known as the Compton Hill Cubs.

MORRISON: In St. Louis?

WEBB: In St. Louis. He later went to the St. Louis Stars and become one of the greatest center fielders in any man's league. Satchel Paige once said he was so fast a man that he could turn out the light and jump in bed before it got dark. I guess you've heard that before?

MORRISON: No, I've never heard that before. That's pretty fast.

WEBB: "Cool Papa" is on Cloud Nine these days, looking for to be in Cooperstown August 12th for the greatest day of our lives. I'm going to be sent there sponsored by a group of Black businessmen: Morris Henderson, Roscoe McCrary, Clay (Representative William), and Reverend Cummings (James L.) of Lane Tabernacle Church.

MORRISON: Who is sponsoring the trip up there?

WEBB: Uh-huh.

MORRISON: When did the Tandy League start?

WEBB: That Tandy League started back in 1922.

MORRISON: And you were one of the people that helped to get it started?

WEBB: Yeah, the Tandy League, . . . No, I'm not one of those that helped to get it started, I'm one of the first to play in it, but there's a story here. The Tandy League has the distinction of being the first Colored Men's League here. This organization has made baseball history at Tandy Park, was organized March 15, 1922. The teams were Union Electric, Scullen Steel, Missouri Pressed Brick, Mississippi Tanning Company. Mr. Gus Warmoth, a retired sporting goods salesman, was our first president. And he died about five, six years ago.

MORRISON: Now that was the first Black league?

WEBB: That was the first Munny League. There were only nineteen still complete in the early Fifties last year. But it started in 1922. My role in that, I was Vice-president, secretary, business manager, captain, official scorer, for the League for thirty-four years. In 1935 I refused the presidency.

MORRISON: Why did you refuse it?

WEBB: Well, I didn't want to have to be more confined than as Vice-president that I happened to be right there. I played the role of President many a time.

MORRISON: Even though you were an actual President you played the role of. . .

WEBB: That's right, uh, uh, during the Depression years we disbanded in 1931 but then we picked up in 1932.

MORRISON: Just for one year then?

WEBB: Yeah, uh, my interest extends beyond just the Tandy League, I was on other amateur leagues in the City, and set up many leagues. One was the old Foster League.

MORRISON: How old was that, when did it. . .

WEBB: Well, that didn't run for a couple years. I have records collectings, I have a book like I got there, I can go upstairs and bring back thirty or

forty more books like that. I've been keeping records, I can go back sixty years when I was a kid. I keep scraps on anything.

MORRISON: You do have a lot of stuff here.

WEBB: Yes, baseball has rewarded me with mementoes and memories, but little else. I would do it all over again. I receive a few awards, phone calls and letters from many friends, and former players, fans, many of them want to thank me for my interest down through the years. Here is one I shall always cherish. "Dear Tweed: I could not stop thinking of what an unusual service that you render each season. Faithful, accurate, friendly and an inspiration to the young. Sincerely, John J. Buckner," he's an educator in our city, and a civic, he gets around and is well-known. Then the families of the deceased players contact me specially, thanking me. This means more to me than money. Why? Because I love people and may I dedicate my favorite point to all of the families of the deceased players here.

"If I can stop one heart from breaking,

I shall not live in vain.

If I can ease one life the aching or cool one pain,

Or help one fainting robin back into his nest again,

I shall not live in vain."

MORRISON: Who wrote that, you wrote it?

WEBB: That's from Miss Emily Dickinson, the poet.

MORRISON: It's a nice poem.

WEBB: Yes. And I'm a member of Scruggs Memorial C. M. E. Church, The Reverend L. Douglass is pastor.

MORRISON: How long have you been a member of the Church?

WEBB: Oh, about seven years. Of course I'm originally from Antioch Baptist Church, I've been a Baptist all my life, I've turned over in the last seven years to Methodist.

MORRISON: Why did you change?

WEBB: I couldn't answer that.

MORRISON: Well, obviously there was much less opportunity for Blacks when you grew up. Do you have any regrets about that or any resentments?

WEBB: No, for the simple reason why, uh, you ain't doin' it 'cause Negroes weren't around in the Big Leagues.

MORRISON: Right. No, just in every time. . .

WEBB: Just, just, well the time just wasn't right. I have no regrets, no, no, not uh, no, my life I would live it all over again for myself. Now, if I would go all over again, and I say this honestly, I would still be in amateur baseball, 'cause I like to be good in my field. I'm at the top of the mountain. In 1913, the Lord gave me a vision, and I, uh, and I, well, He took me by my hand and step by step I went to the mountaintop. I reached that mountaintop on March 21st of this year, I was elected to, I was selected for the Greater Hall of Fame here. Now I'm up on that mountain, I can go down and help some other boys. My life is designed for amateur ball, we're put here for one thing; or perhaps I could have been a professional in baseball like today, like Lou Brock, but that's just wishful thinking. I lived in an era when there was Jim Crow. So I shouldn't be wishing I lived in today's era, so I just look back to where I was. I actually would go back over and do it all over again during those times because niggers were Jim Crow and what not, but as an amateur, I went to the highest house, and I'm up there on the mountaintop on Cloud Nine.

MORRISON: Do you, uh, you think you could have played in the pros?

WEBB: Well, I played for one year in the pros, the Negro Pro League.

MORRISON: I mean you always felt you were good enough to play in the Pro Leagues?

WEBB: Well, I uh, sure, I could play, there was no question I could play.

MORRISON: But you don't have any regrets about not being able to because you were Black?

WEBB: No, because as I was saying, I was born forty years too soon perhaps, let's put it that way. Now if I would have lived my life over in that same period, I would go back in there and help and inspire many a boy. And down through the years, I have such boys as big-leaguers from St. Louis who played in the Big Leagues from St. Louis; Elston Howard, I gave him his first write-up.

MORRISON: He's from St. Louis?

WEBB: Yes, was with the Yankees, from St. Louis. Sammy Jethroe, these are St. Louis fellows, Quincy Troupe, all big league boys I'm talking about, I'd spy them and give them their first write-up. And Sammy Compton, Nate Colbert, he's a San Diego Padre. There was a number of kids and I inspired them and there's about eight of those boys; and Ted Savage and I said Luke Easter. And I grew many of those guys, and it's beautiful to be approached and come up and say, "'Tweed', I remember when you inspired me." It's beautiful, I'm rich, I have many friends. Rich.

MORRISON: Now, how long did you play amateur baseball?

WEBB: Well, amateur baseball, I played in the, well, played, well in the Tandy League it was 1922. That's pretty good competition. I played up unto 1922, but in '22 it was pretty good amateur. I played in '22 clean up unto 1935. I stopped because in 1932 I was writing and playing and it didn't mix and I thought I could do a better service and stop then. I still had the faith.

MORRISON: So you started writing for the St. Louis Argus?

WEBB: The St. Louis Argus. I wrote for the St. Louis Argus, I'm still writing for them really. I had a Hot Stove League column, it was in the Argus from 1932 until 1969, thirty-seven years, the Hot Stove League.

MORRISON: The Hot Stove League?

WEBB: That's it, 1932. But as to today, the only thing I write today is about sickness, deaths, historical dates or special things or. . . There's newspapers all over the country that ask me different things about Black baseball and I write the things about that. Short subjects.

MORRISON: Now how did you happen to get the title for your column, the Hot Stove League?

WEBB: Well, Hot Stove League is in sports when, uh, it's something like when you sit around a stove and when you cannot get out there and play and you're disgusted. That's about the only thing I can think of. And you're disgusted with gossip or with whatever happened during the winter, and you talk about it during the winter but of course Hot Stove, that was just, they called it "the Hot Stove Bull Session." That's what anybody would say. Take Bob (Robert) Burnes, he calls it the Hot Stove Session. But you're talking about sports in the winter when it's out of season. You're still. . .

MORRISON: You're talking about when you want to do it and you can't do it?

WEBB: Yes, that's the idea, yes. Uh, you know, uh, I guess you heard about the St. Louis Stars? That's the team "Cool Papa" Bell played on.

INTERRUPTION

MORRISON: Now when did "Cool Papa" Bell move to St. Louis?

WEBB: In 1919.

MORRISON: From Mississippi?

WEBB: Yeah, in 1919.

MORRISON: How did you happen to meet him?

WEBB: Well, I met him, we played ball, he was (with) the Compton Hill Cubs and I played with the Black Sox.

MORRISON: You played against each other.

WEBB: Yes, against each other on the sandlots.

MORRISON: And, then, um, you were talking about the St. Louis Stars.

WEBB: Yes, it was in 1922 when the St. Louis Stars appeared up on the horizon. The late Dick Kenton of some old association purchased the Giants franchise so they could start a club in the Negro National League, which was formed by Rube Foster who located at Compton and Market.

INTERRUPTION

WEBB: You know the Stars, they had a tremendous team, they won the championship in 1930 and 1931. It was in 1932 when the Stars broke up, during the Depression years. The city bought the grounds, and made a playground of it: Vashon Center.

MORRISON: Is that near Vashon High School?

WEBB: Vashon High School, that sets, uh, right there. Now the Stars had great players like George Giles, "Cool Papa" Bell, Willie Bobo, Roosevelt Davis, Leroy Matlock, Ted (Theodore "Double Duty") Radcliffe, Charles Zomphier, Quincy Troupe, A. D. Young, Newt (Newton) Allen, "Eggy" ("Slap") Hensley, M. (Dan) Wilson, Clarence Palm, Branch Russell, "Devil" (Willie) Wells, John Russell, Wilson Redus to name a few. And the first night game played in Black baseball here was in July of the Fourth, 1928. Kansas City played the Stars, the first night game played here at the Stars park.

MORRISON: That was near Vashon, right, the same place?

WEBB: Yes, that's right.

MORRISON: Now this was still amateur league?

WEBB: No, this is professional, yes professional.

MORRISON: It was a Black professional league?

WEBB: Yes, again it was the St. Louis Stars, that was the team of "Cool Papa" Bell played, the St. Louis Stars, 1922 to 1932. They won the championship in the Negro National League two years.

MORRISON: How many teams were there in the country then?

WEBB: Well, including the country, they had the American League, the National League, . . .

MORRISON: I mean in this league?

WEBB: Well, this league, it had about eight, eight different teams in this league.

MORRISON: And you traveled around the different cities?

WEBB: Yes, uh-huh.

MORRISON: Uh-huh.

WEBB: And everyone remembers the old Stars park, it had a sharp right field, only 269 feet for the right hand hitter, but center field was deep, and "Cool Papa" used to catch anything that stayed in the ball park.

MORRISON: He played center field?

WEBB: Center field.

MORRISON: Just like Willie Mays.

WEBB: Now I like to go back, way back, I can go back to 1909, that's when the first professional Black team played here. Charley Mills, a sportsman of note, organized the St. Louis Giants. And had such stars as Joe Hewitt, Dan Kennard, Eddie Holtz, Bill Gatewood, Bill (William "Plunk") Drake, "Rucker" (Charles) Blackwell, Oscar Charleston, George Scales, Dudley ("Tully") Macadoo, to name a few. And they played out on Kuebler's Park out on North Broadway.

MORRISON: Was that, is that as big as the St. Louis Stars park?

WEBB: It was bigger, yeah, it was back in little ol', well both of them was made of wood back in those days. It was a big ol' fence surrounding it and it wasn't much of a grandstand to hold a lot of people.

MORRISON: Did you have a lot of crowds to come out and watch you?

WEBB: Well, certain teams would bring in, uh, pretty good, drawing power clubs, it was in 1917 and I was bat boy for Rube Foster. That was the greatest team I ever saw. Rube Foster is the greatest character, he was the greatest pitcher before Satchel Paige. 'Round turn of the century everyone was talking about Rube Foster. He was the greatest manager, permanent president we ever had. This was all before the Satchel Paige's days. I seen all the Black greats of yesterdays, yesteryears, players since, well, 1913. I've been a keen observer since, well, I got about fifty-five years but I've been as a kid you can say at the age of eight or nine an observer. But I had a pretty high I. Q. on baseball at the age of ten.

MORRISON: And now uh, Satchel Paige, did you know him?

WEBB: Well, I listened t' him, uh yes, I interviewed him and knew him as a player. Yeah, personally, you mean. Well, uh, just two weeks ago Satchel Paige came in from Kansas City, "Cool Papa" Bell and myself, who appeared at Busch Stadium in a private room, Joe Garagiola came in with a party of eight, television, NBC-TV, there will be a special on a Monday night, soon, it's already taped, and we talk Black baseball.

MORRISON: Is it pretty good?

WEBB: Well, I hope so uh, (laughter) . . .

MORRISON: Talk about old times?

WEBB: Yes it is. I have records and I show my book I don't have. This is one of the books, and, yeah, this's the book. This what you'll see on TV. I

shouldn't be saying this, ought to make this a _____(laughter). And that is what they focus on it. I'll explain all those, that's all, my All-Star team, all-time Black. It makes a difference, that's an all-star team.

MORRISON: Now, where did "Cool Papa" Bell live now, in St. Louis?

WEBB: He probably lives on the 3000 of Dickson in St. Louis.

MORRISON: In St. Louis?

WEBB: Yeah, St. Louis.

MORRISON: He still lives around. . .

WEBB: Oh, he is my best friend.

MORRISON: Is he?

WEBB: I'll put it that way. My best all-time friend I'll ever be. Yeah.

INTERRUPTION

WEBB: That's what you asked me, isn't it?

MORRISON: Now when you first started working on the Argus you played baseball at the same time?

WEBB: Well, uh, in fact I started my Hot Stove column in 1932, but I was writing articles for the Argus before the "Hot Stove League", I would say as far back as 1929, like I wrote articles, but I wasn't no preacher, ah, I just liked some ball games. Now I was playing too, well just uh . . .

MORRISON: How did you happen to start working on the Argus then?

WEBB: Well, because, just like interest in baseball, and I could push it, I saw I could push it.

MORRISON: Did you like to . . .

WEBB: And I'll make this for the tape, and I not want to say I worked for the Argus, and make it. I didn't do that, that's just a matter that I, I didn't work for the Argus, let's get that straight. But you wouldn't know that, but I,

not on salary.

MORRISON: Uh-huh.

WEBB: But I call that, that's what I call it, it's just a matter of me and my interest in it. I pushed many fellows like that, and I wasn't on no salary.

MORRISON: Did you. . .

WEBB: I dedicated my whole life to amateur baseball and never, never made a dime. Amateur baseball, now I couldn't make a dime. I don't say I didn't make no money, 'cause I was official scorer for Negro Baseball here for severteen years, you know, when they played at Busch Stadium, at old Busch Stadium. And I was official scorer and they paid me, and being a scorerkeeper in amateur, that's paying for my service, but other than that I wasn't paid, so I couldn't definitely say I worked for the Argus. But if it's money you wanna talk about that's, you're talking about working, I wrote articles now, I wanna get that straight.

MORRISON: Now when did you start writing, how did you know you wanted to be a writer too, did you just . . .

WEBB: I did it 'cause it's a plug for amateur baseball and I could inspire, I remember when I was a kid around ten or eleven and twelve or so and sometime I put an article in and it said Normal "Tweed" Webb starred at shortstop, and the Black Sox won, Normal "Tweed" Webb starred at shortstop. Cornell ("Red") Deebury struck out ten men. And 'e 'asn't more than two or three lines or so, and ooh, that did so much for me.

MORRISON: And then you write . . .

WEBB: You better believe it! Yes, I did. I'd do it all over again. Money is, money doesn't mean a thing to me now.

MORRISON: Why did you happen to decide to then to quit playing baseball and just

stick to the Argus full-time?

WEBB: Well, you mean, uh, well, I don't get that question.

MORRISON: Well, in 1935 you didn't, uh, . . .

WEBB: In 1935, yeah, I started just, get out of baseball, just pushing it more.

MORRISON: Just writing for the Argus?

WEBB: Just writing for the Argus, yeah, and just didn't play because I just write my column and plug it more.

MORRISON: Uh-huh. And you felt you couldn't do both at the same time?

WEBB: Well, that's right, because uh, yeah, uh that was it.

MORRISON: So, then, uh, you've been like, for thirty-seven years, like, you didn't get paid on the Argus, you just . . .

WEBB: Well, I want to say it like this: I wasn't on salary, I ought make that clear. No, see, when you say I'm working, what I mean, you work for a salary, why that's what you mean?

MORRISON: Yeah, right.

WEBB: Well, I wouldn't say they wouldn't give me a little something, let's put it that way. There wasn't nothing, just a matter, a little compensation. So I wasn't working for them. And what I wrote was just up on me. But I wrote stuff like I was getting a big salary. I ought to make that clear, but, uh, I, y'know it did pay a little something but I wasn't on a salary. People thought I was on a salary, the interest I put into it and publications I did, I did all up to today all down through my career I spent a lifetime in amateur ball, that's what I'm trying to tell you. It's just so _____ and I didn't make the money, if I made any money, I'd have. . . amateur baseball. But I'd do it all over again. I helped inspire many a boy, I'll repeat it, many a boy. It's nice for me to walk out on the street and see a fellow say "'Tweed', I remember when you and Rabbit used to write about me."

MORRISON: Did you travel to different cities then?

WEBB: Not for amateur baseball. But. . .

MORRISON: I mean for the Argus when you. . .

WEBB: Well, I covered East-West games for the Argus, that's the Negroes game for every, for five seasons I covered the East-West game in Chicago. I got a kick out of that.

MORRISON: Um-hum.

INTERRUPTION

MORRISON: Okay then, Mr. Webb you were talking about that you were also a pro for a year. Um, when did you become pro again?

WEBB: Well, I played in the old Negro League for the Fort Wayne Pirates, Indiana, in 1926. My salary was only \$30 per week and I decided I couldn't support a family as a ball player working about six months. I had many opportunities to play professional ball but I turned them down during them Jim Crow years. I decided to stick to my trade as a sign painter.

MORRISON: When did you start that?

WEBB: I started painting signs November the 18th, 1930 and painted up unto 19, uh, until about three years ago. 1971.

MORRISON: You had your own company?

WEBB: I had my own self-employed, worked for myself. Over forty-four years. Self-employed sign painter. That's why I couldn't put a little family, and my family reached eight, and a family of eight, I couldn't keep on playing ball. And a lot of people would say "'Tweed', if you were so good as a ball player, why didn't I play in the old Negro League?" And that's my answer.

MORRISON: 'Cause you had to support a. . .

WEBB: 'Cause them ball players played five months and they got to look for a job. And a man with a large family during those Jim Crow years, it was just, it was a battle.

MORRISON: Um-hum. So now . . .

WEBB: I would like to, huh?

MORRISON: You were in the league for a year then, the pro league?

WEBB: Yeah, uh, we won the 1926 semi-pro championship of Indiana in a tournament. Our record in the Negro League was twenty wins, twelve losses, one tie. I batted .289, fielding percentage of .905, stole twenty bases. So my pro record was just brief. As I said, I had an opportunity to play, but I turned it down.

MORRISON: Did you enjoy playing?

WEBB: I enjoyed playing pro ball, but I just couldn't confine myself to going away playing with a family in the summer. Winter time, fall, you had to be doing, you just had to be looking for employment.

MORRISON: Okay, so now, you were on a taped television show a couple of weeks ago, . . .

WEBB: Right on!

MORRISON: . . .And what was some of the things you talked about on there?

WEBB: Well, Joe Garagiola only, well, uh, he would refer me back to one time with Hank Aaron who did play with the Negro League and I told him he played with the Indianapolis Clowns, yeah. Then the highlight was on "'Tweed's' Hall of Fame". And I had to run down the names of the twelve men I picked for the Hall of Fame.

MORRISON: Um-hum.

END SIDE ONE OF TAPE

BEGIN SIDE TWO OF TAPE

WEBB: . . .was selected from the, Negroes contributed the records, the merit, the recognition from 1889 to ways back to 1947. The first man I would put in the Hall of Fame would be Rube Foster. As I said, he was the great president, the greatest manager before Satchel Paige, . . .

MORRISON: Did he play also?

WEBB: . . .He played about, he played, he played in his early days. He was a great pitcher, around the turn of the century. One year he won fifty-one games out of fifty-five, playing against barnstorming white pro teams who in that era. . .

MORRISON: Did you know him personally?

WEBB: Yeah, in 1917 I had the privilege to be the mascot. I used to hang around Argyle and Broadway, because they can keep you as a mascot and go out there and keep score in right field. In those days you had an old scoreboard in right field pen out there and you could stand on a platform and put, the umpire went out and told you how many scores to put up there. And if you go out there as early as you can you can get to do that or be a mascot and if you get to know those guys you get to be a mascot on several occasions. Or then you get out there and just wait till a ball comes over the fence. And that's been years ago, back in 1917, 18.

MORRISON: How early did you have to get there before the game started?

WEBB: Well, we'd get there, the game started in those days, the game would start at 4:00. But we'd get there, a doubleheader would start at one, mostly doubleheader we'd have, we'd get out there at twelve o'clock. Yep, and see the ballplayers come in and try to get to carry their luggage in, something in to get in the ball park.

MORRISON: Didn't they charge admission?

WEBB: Oh sure, the admission then was thirty-five cents and fifty cents back in those days now, way back.

MORRISON: That was a lot of money back in those days.

WEBB: Oh yes. Uh-huh. Now, uh, the team that I select, as I said Rube Foster, was well, there's twelve and it doesn't matter, I ain't putting them just in order. I'll read them in order. But I said Rube Foster would have been my selection before Satchel Paige, and I said that to Satchel right in his presence. You know what I mean? It wasn't, because he's tremendous, a great, everybody knows Satchel. And they know him. What disturbs me is that they ain't no one who'll talk about Rube Foster, and then I had--I mean talk today, they don't many, that was the greatest name in baseball, that was the pride of Negro baseball. And Rube Foster was the greatest pitcher as I said, the greatest manager, the greatest president we ever had. And I seen 'em all play. And they had the greatest team, the Chicago American Giants. They had one of the greatest infields I ever seen played. Then I had Satchel Paige, I had. Then I had Oscar Charleston, he was the greatest ballplayer in the early twenties. That's all you hear about, Oscar Charleston, he had lines of page. I can't see why they don't talk about Oscar Charleston, because he. . .

MORRISON: Where did he play?

WEBB: Played center field. But they don't talk about him as being in the Hall of Fame now. Satchel was telling me, it takes fellows like myself and other fellows to help push, talk, go back and dig up these players. Satch said that himself. He said it looked like they was just drawing from just a certain era.

MORRISON: They should go all the way back to . . .

WEBB: They should get some of them boys. I been naming stars around his era, originally. Great ballplayers, he agreed. And if I run down this list you'll see.

MORRISON: Okay. Sure.

WEBB: John Henry Lloyd was the greatest Negro shortstop of, one of the greatest Negro shortstops period. Bizzy (Raleigh) Mackey, Smokey Joe Williams, the fastest pitcher I ever seen throw a ball. And Walter Johnson, that's a white fellow. And Smokey Joe Williams threw the ball faster than any pitcher I ever seen play. And Bob Feller was good too, so I don't know, that was the fastest. . . Ben (Benjamin) Taylor, first baseman, "Cool Papa" Bell, "Bullet" (Wilbur) Rogan, pitcher, Willie Wells, a great shortstop, and John Donaldson, pitcher. Now I name those fellows, and I might have three or four pitchers but I think those are pitchers who deserve the merit to be in the Hall of Fame. If you don't mention them, well, a lot of these names are not mentioned today. And I seen them all play, a lot of them fellows up there are maybe forty or fifty years old. What do they know about fellows way back? When you talk about the Hall of Fame you go back to the grassed crooks and dig all the way back. And there is no greater name than Rube Foster.

MORRISON: Well, this is your Hall of Fame. . .

WEBB: That was my Hall of Fame.

MORRISON: Uh-huh. When was the other Hall of Fame started?

WEBB: Well, the other Hall of Fame was in 1970. That was when Satchel Paige was elected. That was a special for the Negro, uh, the Special Committee on Negroes, they gave them, the Negroes didn't have a chance before Jackie Robinson days, yeah.

MORRISON: Now, when was, do you know when the Hall of Fame was started though?

WEBB: Oh, the Hall of Fame, you mean the White Hall of Fame? Well, uh, uh, I imagine it's been going about thirty years ago.

MORRISON: Who was the first Black to get in the Hall of Fame?

WEBB: It was Satchel Paige.

MORRISON: Satchel Paige?

WEBB: Satchel Paige. And then following Satchel Paige was Josh Gibson, Buck Leonard, Monte Irvin. And "Cool Papa" Bell, my long-time friend.

MORRISON: Um-hum. And you were instrumental in getting him into the Hall of Fame.

WEBB: Well, now, uh, . . .

MORRISON: "Cool Papa" Bell.

WEBB: Bob Broeg, Bob Burnes, have mentioned it and I have, I'll put it this way: I kept his name alive. "Cool Papa" got in on his own bat and speed. But I talked about "Cool Papa" Bell all down through my career.

MORRISON: When you. . .

WEBB: I talked about. . .

MORRISON: You had to tell people about that he was, that, um, that he should get in the Hall of Fame.

WEBB: I talked about how to send, uh, literature and copies and things all over the country. In fact I write, I keep up sending write-ups to all old time ball all over the country from coast to coast, full-timers. And newspapers, I write stuff into it.

MORRISON: 'Cause a lot of people don't remember those things. . .

WEBB: Not only "Cool Papa" Bell, I campaigned for cognition for all black ball. Willie Mays and all of them down through my, it must have been baseball all my life, I wrote about it all my life.

MORRISON: Um-hum. Now, . . .

WEBB: Say, uh, perhaps, maybe, heh-heh, maybe I'm not known, I'm beginning to be

known and what not, but I appreciate the Negro Baseball, all of them, I wrote about. And I have copies, like I have books like this one, this book here. I could go up and show you thirty books, well more than thirty books similar to this. This is the last one that I have. These are different things I can go up and refer, 'cause I can't bring all them books and if you don't believe me. . .

MORRISON: No, I believe you.

WEBB: You know what I mean. People don't, see. Bob Broeg, I had so many records three years ago, he said, "'Tweed', you got so many records that I can't even," so he said, "'Tweed', I'd have to take off days to look through all your records." And he believed me. And I can go through and show you why I wrote stuff, and I dig everything. And Joe Garagiola will tell you that. And you can look at this book yourself. Joe Garagiola said, "'Tweed', one thing about 'Tweed', he dates everything, and that's important."

MORRISON: And so he. . .

WEBB: Joe Garagiola telling people, "He been around, but "Tweed" dates things, and that's important." Now if I write something I can go back and say a certain date. Now right here is different dates, right here, I'd say that, well I can bring out stuff about Tandy Park and when it was dedicated. Then I can talk about the Stars and the disbandonment of the Stars when amateur ball got its real chance here. And I'm gonna talk about that later. And I can talk about, uh, this here, uh, back in 1921 when the St. Louis Giants played the Cardinals. Bob Burnes somehow was there and saw that game. See, that was a date, I didn't have a date on that, but the year. That's one thing I don't, see, I don't mislead anything, I have to 'cause I worry about being able to refer back. And this is the stuff, well, I got some more stuff, but I can't bring the book, I can go up

there and put my hand on it for you. Just different highlights of things that, uh, "Cool Papa" Bell, in 1941, he set the Mexican League and it was his best year, when he hit .437. Now the Hall of Fame had his record, but it didn't have it right, and it didn't, they had him down for twelve home runs. Well, they wrote to me and I changed it, they went by my record: twenty home runs. And here it is right here, I'm gonna show it to you. I keep them, that's "Cool Papa" Bell's record in the Hall of Fame.

MORRISON: Twenty home runs instead of twelve.

WEBB: Now I mean this year, right in here. And it showed, see right there, see, they give him twenty. I wrote and told them they had a mistake, that's what they did. And this is what I wrote about him in 1941. I said: One-time St. Louis Star fleet-footed centerfielder still goin' strong. This partial column, "'Cool Papa' Bell will begin his twentieth season. . ." I wrote this period, I really shouldn't write. This is just a little sketch I can read to you. You know about it. And it goes on to tell, this is his year that I wrote about. I sent that copy to them, but that's a better way out than that, and they sent it back, they corrected it, and that goes on his Hall of Fame. That's how they respected me. See what I mean?

MORRISON: Right.

WEBB: That goes from the Hall of Fame, see?

MORRISON: Now Jackie Robinson, was he put in the Hall of Fame yet?

WEBB: Oh sure, Jackie Robinson, oh yeah, sure, Jackie Robinson, oh yeah, he was named five years, you know, after he was put in there, sure.

MORRISON: When was . . .

INTERRUPTION

WEBB: Well, I guess you know Jackie Robinson wasn't the first Black player in the Big Leagues.

MORRISON: I'm not sure if I do or not.

WEBB: Well, Jackie Robinson signed a Brooklyn Dodger contract at 11:28 a. m. on April the 11th, 1974, on a Friday.

MORRISON: On 19 what?

WEBB: 1947.

MORRISON: 47?

WEBB: Uh-huh, the time was 11:28 a. m. on April the 11th.

MORRISON: How did you know it was that time?

WEBB: Well, I, uh, it was in the papers and I wrote about it in the different columns, my column, and I naturally got it out of New York.

MORRISON: Uh-huh.

WEBB: And Negroes played organized baseball back in the 1880's in what was then a major league. In 1884, when Cleveland moved up to the American Association, then a major league, the American Association, it was a major league, the first Negro big-leaguer was catcher Moses "Fleetwood" Walker, born in 1857 at Mount Pleasant, Ohio. Died in 1924. He played until 1928, then the Jim Crow ball was set up.

MORRISON: In what year now?

WEBB: In 19, up, I mean 1898. Now in 1901, John McGraw, he tried hard to get some Negroes into the Big Leagues.

MORRISON: Who was John McGraw?

WEBB: Johnny was a great manager of the Baltimore club of that time, then he began to be the manager of the New York Giants later. Baltimore club at that time, 1901. He tried to pass off Charley Grant, a light-complected Negro with straight hair, Indian-looking fellow, tried to pass him off as an Indian.

MORRISON: Um-hum. To see if he could play?

WEBB: Yeah, heh-heh. It doesn't _____. But he never did appear in a regular line-up. One night, they threw a party in Harlem, heh-heh, and they found out he was a Negro. They threw a big party, and they had to carry out the box, and then the door was shut. I won't tell Jackie Robinson that he opened up the. . .

MORRISON: Who found out about it then?

WEBB: Well, it was baseball people. Yes, that's the way the story went. Yeah, that's the way it went.

MORRISON: And then, who went in after that, anyone before Jackie Robinson?

WEBB: Oh, nobody, no more than that, just sit, then the door, the lid was shut on the Jim Crow Era and when Jackie Robinson came in in 1947, then, that's when it opened up again.

MORRISON: Who were actually some of the people that put the ban on having Black players in the league?

WEBB: Ah-hum, whatcha mean? Uh, you mean at, during that time that. . .

MORRISON: Yeah, people like, uh, you know, in the National League. . .

WEBB: Yeah, gimme, uh, gimme, uh, put the ban on Black. . .

MORRISON: . . .against having Black players in the league?

WEBB: Well, y'know, uh, in 19, uh, the fellow they call, uh, let's see, he's with the Cubs, he protested vigorously about it, because that's when they was trying to, uh, John McGraw tried awful hard, but. . .

MORRISON: To have Blacks get in the league?

WEBB: Yeah, but this fellow. . .

MORRISON: Was he a white person?

WEBB: Oh yeah, he was with the Chicago Cubs organization.

MORRISON: Uh-huh.

INTERRUPTION

MORRISON: Now what was the man's name who kept Blacks from coming into the league?

WEBB: The man, the man who held one of the Chicago Cubs, he was a manager, a former manager, Pop Anson. He raised a colored question, he just, he was big as John McGraw, he just didn't want to let Negroes into the Big Leagues. Don't wanna, don't want to barnstorm against them, play against them. But he finally did though, he played barnstorm after the season, against them later. But not to play in the Big League. His team, the Cubs, played against Negroes in the barnstorm after the season.

MORRISON: But he was reluctant to let them play against them in the Big Leagues?

WEBB: No, he was one of, he was one of, but there was more than just him. To name them all wouldn't be the right delivery on to name the man and nobody else. He was one of them, a main one.

MORRISON: Um-hum.

INTERRUPTION

MORRISON: Now, Tandy Park was the first ball field where the Black league began?

WEBB: No, well, it was the first Tandy League played in the, it was during World War I, the city decided to clear the site between Pendleton and Goode. . .

MORRISON: Why was that, do you know why they decided to?

WEBB: . . .and Cottage and Kennerly Street for an athletic field. There's a whole area with the name, you know, from Pendleton and Garfield, Compton, Goode, Cottage and Kennerly, In that area for an athletic field and a recreation center.

MORRISON: What was that before, do you know?

WEBB: It was just houses.

MORRISON: Houses?

WEBB: All up and down, that's what it was. In 1920 they called it Sumner High School campus, right across from Sumner High. On April the 15th, 1922, Tandy Park was dedicated. We kids such as Red Deebury, Dean Terry, Terry Butler, Moss Brothers, Rightler Harrison, George Ransom, to name a few, all helped to build the diamond before the city graded the ground. That was, in other words, in 1919, and 20 and 21 there was houses that went through the process of, getting all the houses down and leveling off the ground. And as they would grow, as they would move on down the area, we would collect all the same articles off the ground and we would start playing ball until finally there wasn't too much houses in the area. I personally brought home plate. The Tandy Center was dedicated on May the 15th, 1938. That's the center. That's where, that's the recreation center.

MORRISON: I believe they have a pool there and. . .

WEBB: Oh, everything. And it was named for the Black captain, Carleton W. Tandy, a yesteryear war veteran. Of course I'm so proud to have been called Mr. Tandy League, after my retirement as a player. And the pride of Tandy Park during my playing days.

MORRISON: How long did you play there, actually?

WEBB: Well, I played on Tandy Park, heh, the Tandy League started in 1922, but we started playing ball a couple years before the league started.

MORRISON: Down on. . .

WEBB: Yeah, on weekends, we was first over there.

MORRISON: Uh-huh.

INTERRUPTION

MORRISON: Now Mr. Webb, what were some of the highlights of your career? Can you remember some of the moments?

WEBB: Well, I think that, uh, I like to think that, uh, giving, grooming such local Big Leaguers as I can name them before, Elston Howard, Big Luke Easter, Al Smith, Sam Pendleton, Quincy Troupe, Ted Savage, Sammy Jethroe, and Nate Colbert, the first write-up when they were kids, inspiring them, I think that's my greatest, one of my achievements, pushing them on. Now as I said before, I had a quite a, just a few days that I was honored. On July the 12th, 1964, I was honored before ten thousand fans at Tandy Park with our East-West game.

MORRISON: What were you honored for there?

WEBB: Well, from, ah, service to baseball, down through the years.

MORRISON: How old were you then?

WEBB: Well, at that time I was sixty-four, and this is all, you take off nine years from now, I'm fifty-nine, fifty-eight, I don't feel, something. In 1967, at the Mathews-Dickey Boys Club, which I work, I'm on public relations on that, honored me for being one of the community's most outstanding citizens in 1966. And July the 30th, 1967, radio station KATZ named me citizen of the week. And John was listing the individuals, I was positioned, that they honored me. They said I had performed the distinction of a multitude of duties with the oldest amateur baseball league, Black amateur, I should say, in the city. And January the 15th, 1961, St. Louis Negro National Umpires Association honored me at their annual dinner for years of loyal and conscientious service as our official scorer of Tandy League baseball. Today, in retirement, I limit my baseball reporting to just special events: death, sickness, Mathews-Dickey Boys Club and story up-to-dates. I do not cover baseball any more. But mostly deaths, look like they come by the dozens.

MORRISON: Just old players you knew?

WEBB: Yeah, and sickness. And I organized the Old-time Negro Baseball Players Association in March the 20th, 1970. That's to help ailing Negro baseball players.

MORRISON: Um-hum. Who are some of the players still living that you knew?

WEBB: Well, you mean some of the players that are still living today?

MORRISON: Right, that you knew from back in those times?

WEBB: Well, some of the greats, John Brown, Tom Brooks, John Green, Chisholm Brothers, Sylvester Mitchell, . . .

MORRISON: They're all still living.

WEBB: They all still living.

MORRISON: In St. Louis?

WEBB: Yeah, they are in the St. Louis area. Specs Williams, he's in California, and, uh, I could go on and. . .

MORRISON: So there are still pretty many still living.

WEBB: We're dwindling down, really. Time is catching up on all of us.

MORRISON: Uh-huh.

INTERRUPTION

MORRISON: Now, when did the Amateur Hall of Fame get started in St. Louis?

WEBB: Well, uh, they, uh, I was inducted in the Hall March 21st, but, uh, the Hall of Fame was set up, ground work was laid about seven months before that, I would say in the fall of 1973. A fellow by the name of, he's the chairman, Don Gabbert, he held a, he said he had a vision, and he told his wife one night that he would like to do something to give recognition to the amateur boys who played baseball in the city of St. Louis. And that's the way it was born.

MORRISON: From that one man.

WEBB: That one man. He got men like Bob Broeg, Bob Burnes, uh, and quite a few men on the Hall of Fame Committee. And they are dedicated men. Anytime a group of men get together to honor amateur baseballs like that there's no money to be made. To give recognition to these fellows is a tremendous thing. It's a big thing. It's, there's nothing like it in the United States, they say. It's the first one. It's the Greater St. Louis Amateur Baseball Hall of Fame.

MORRISON: Now, how many people are in the St. Louis Baseball Hall of Fame?

WEBB: Well, they inducted twenty-two in the St. Louis Amateur Hall of Fame and, heh, uh, I was along the Mathew-Dickeys, the Black players, of course they had twenty other fellows, white players in their Hall of Fame.

MORRISON: Um-hum. Well, was this for mostly the Black leagues?

WEBB: No, this is the amateur baseball for everybody.

MORRISON: Like St. Louis?

WEBB: Uh-huh. Oh yeah, twenty whites made it, some made it as sponsors category, some as ball players, I came under the ball players, some deceased ball players, maybe eight of them under that category. But I came in under the ten ball players that made honors as ball players, some as sponsors, such as Tom Kutis, the undertaker. Martin Mathews, he made it on his sponsor, he's the Mathews-Dickey Boys Club co-host and coordinator. And Al Mick, he's the manager of the Heine-Meine League. And there is Shaeffer, Mel Shaeffer, and fellows like that, they run the sponsors.

MORRISON: How did you have to qualify? What were the qualifications?

WEBB: Well, they looked at a man and what he would contribute as a player, and outstanding player, under the ten player group, ten player group, outstanding records, they thought would be, that went in under the category of the ten outstanding players.

MORRISON: They go by tbeir records?

WEBB: Their records; they comb their records. And I guess, heh, being a historian, I had the inside track because they didn't know about that. Don Gebbert, he said they's know lots about me I know about myself. So naturally I'm gonna write things, but they knew me. My name had been before the public a long time.

MORRISON: So, the information they got for this they got from you then? Since you've got all the records.

WEBB: They got so far, they is, not, that's under the Blacks, y'see, than the whites. See, under the Blacks but that's what they went for, you know, and, um, but I was selected on my baseball ability.

MORRISON: Um=hum.

WEBB: And of course, I guess being a Black historian and what I contribute then down to amateur baseball, and dedicate my whole life to it, I guess I had a ban on it too.

MORRISON: Um-hum. Right.

WEBB: 'Cause there's other fellows I would like to say that, I would like to share my award with other great players like John Brown, whom I consider the greatest player ever to play in the Tandy League. All-around, he's a Willie Mays, all-around ballplayer, he's the greatest about. A teammate, I played shortstop, he played second for the Pullman team. Then you got Timmy Edwards, he was a great manager. They deserve to be in the Hall of Fame later. Then you got Ervin Vincent, one of the greatest left-handers to ever play around here. He only played amateur baseball, he was a college fellow, he didn't go on to try to play professional, he played one year of professional ball. Then you got John Green, he played a little professional ball. There was greats, there was a lot

of greats that deserve to be in that later coming. Maybe they will make it someday. Then you got Doc Brackkons, he's one of the greatest pitchers, he's still living around here. He could have made the Big Leagues, but he worked for Monsanto company, and he made big money. He didn't play in the Negro Leagues, but he played a little barnstorm with them. But he was one of the greatest right-handers to play around St. Louis.

MORRISON: Now, how often do they have people inducted into this Hall of Fame?

WEBB: Oh, it's gonna be an annual thing, every year it's gonna be an annual affair.

MORRISON: It starts since 1970 then?

WEBB: No, this here just started, . . .

MORRISON: 73?

WEBB: This started seven months ago. It just laid. Then March the 21st, that's when they gave our first inductees.

MORRISON: That's when twenty-two people were in. . .

WEBB: Yeah, that's it. That was the first year.

MORRISON: And they have one next year?

WEBB: Oh yeah, they have one every year. They make a big thing out of it. It's a tremendous big thing. It's a great thing for the city.

MORRISON: Do they have some type of memorial somewhere for this?

WEBB: Well now, it's--glad you asked that. Now this here, right here, is a greater, it's gonna be in Busch Stadium. In the Hall of Fame. It's there right now. Our ten names on it, it says room for memorial. All different names. See like there's names.

MORRISON: Now this is a plaque that you got. . .

WEBB: That's the plaque. It's a huge plaque, in the Hall of Fame, and there's my name there. It's the last at the bottom. But the rest, all them could be names later. Take it easy now, that's the beginning of it, it's in Busch Stadium. Now. . .

INTERRUPTION

MORRISON: Now, Mr. Webb, who do you think should be inducted into the Hall of Fame for next year? It may be kinda early, but I'm sure you have some opinions.

WEBB: Well, Bill, I, right now, it's a coincidence, I'm getting material ready now to release and, uh, I'm gonna form a writers campaign for Rube Foster. It started early, right after August the 12th. I'll get a lot of literature out. And y'know, Rube Foster's a great man.

MORRISON: Is he still living?

WEBB: Outstanding athlete. No, he died. If he was living today, I would suppose he would be around ninety-seven, something like that. To leave this man out of the Hall of Fame would be a big joke.

MORRISON: Would you talk about him before. . .

WEBB: And, uh, he used to, I talked about him, about how great he was and everything and I'm gonna campaign, I'm gonna, uh, this is material I'm gonna get out on him, y'see, and I gonna get up and send it around to newspaper writers around the country. For the Hall of Fame, just like I did "Cool Papa" Bell. Because it's just, uh, but this is the man I trying to push, but "Cool Papa", I didn't try. I didn't have to push him. But this is a man I'm trying to wake up and push. I believe this man ought to forget about the Hall of Fame. . .

INTERRUPTION

MORRISON: Now, why was Rube Foster not inducted into the Hall of Fame last year, do you think?

WEBB: I think the men on the committee there didn't seem to push him too much because they're not old-timers like myself. They don't know too much about his record. Or they may know about it but didn't push much about Rube Foster.

MORRISON: Uh-huh.

INTERRUPTION

WEBB: In closing, I'm grateful for my awards. And I'd like to say, to all my friends of the St. Louis metropolitan area including old-time Negro baseball players from coast-to-coast, members of Scruggs Memorial and Lane Tabernacle C. M. E. churches, last and but not least, my neighbors of 4500 and 4600 block of Enright, the greatest people in the world, who so gracefully showered me with congratulations on my selection. To Morris Henderson, Sport editor of the St. Louis American, the St. Louis Argus, Bob Burnes, sport editor of the St. Louis Globe, Bob Broeg of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, and my long-time friend, Ben Thomas of the St. Louis Evening World, for newspaper coverage during my career, my deepest gratitude. To be of service to amateur baseball through my dedicated life has been a most gratifying and rewarding experience. With God's help I hope to be able to double my efforts.

END OF TAPE